REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1, 21, 25, 29, 33 and 43 have been amended and claims 2, 4-10, 16-20, 26, 30, 34, 36-37, 39-42 and 46-55 have been cancelled. Currently, claims 1, 11-15, 21-25, 27-29, 31-33, 38 and 43-45 are pending in the application.

Claims 1, 2, 11-15, 21-34, 38 and 43-55 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over Tanaka et al. (JP 2001-236811).

This rejection is respectfully traversed in view of the amendments to the claims and the following remarks.

The present invention relates to an optical waveguide plate for a surface light emitting apparatus and a surface light emitting apparatus using the optical waveguide plate for a backlight of a liquid crystal display, a panel meter, an indicator light, a surface emitting optical switch, and the like.

As shown in Fig. 1, an optical waveguide plate 1 comprises a light emitting surface 11, which is on one side of a main surface, an end face of an incident side 11a, an opposite end face 11b (which is opposite to the end face of the incident side 11a) and side faces 11c and 11d. The optical waveguide plate 1 further comprises an incident end face 3 which can be different from the end face of the incident side 11a. The incident end face 3 comprises an end face of a light introducing portion 12 which is constructed on the end face of the incident side 11a. Light introducing portions 12a, 12b, 12c are constructed on the incident end face 3 in front of a portion of a light source 2 so as to face the light source 2 as shown in Fig. 1. The light introducing portions 12a, 12b, 12c include a plurality of single notched prisms arranged in different patterns. These single notched prisms are formed in the end face and do not extend outwardly from the end face. Also, these notched prisms are triangular prism shaped and triangular pyramid shaped. Further, as shown in Fig. 1, the center of the light source 2 is disposed adjacent to and spaced from a center of the light introducing portions 12a, 12b and 12c.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to recite "wherein said end face includes a light introducing portion in front of a portion of the light source, and said light introducing portion comprising a plurality of single notched prisms which disperse incident light". The other independent claims 21, 25, 29, 33 and 43 have been also amended in a substantially similar manner. Also, independent claims 1 and 33 have been amended to recite "an interval between two adjacent distal notched prisms in said light introducing portion is greater than an interval between two adjacent proximal notched prisms in said light introducing portion".

These features are not shown or suggested by Tanaka et al.

Tanaka et al. disclose in Fig. 2 that a LED 40 is mounted on a light receiving surface 23, with the remaining region of the distant side provided with a prism array 24. Each of prisms 25 constituting the prism array 24 has a crest 26 and a valley 27 which are arranged parallel in the thickness direction. While Tanaka et al. disclose single notched prisms, those notched prisms are not disposed in front of a portion of the light source as recited in the amended claims. Rather, the light source in Tanaka et al. is disposed next to or contacting a flat portion, not a notched portion. Thus, the light paths in Tanaka et al. are completely different from those in the present application.

Also, Tanaka et al. merely disclose that an interval between two adjacent distal notched prisms in the light introducing portion is either smaller than (in Fig. 4) or equal to (in Figs. 2-3, 5 and 7-9) an interval between two adjacent proximal notched prisms in the light introducing portion. Thus, Tanaka et al. do not disclose that an interval between two adjacent distal notched prisms in the light introducing portion is greater than an interval between two adjacent proximal notched prisms in the light introducing portion.

Independent claim 21 and 43 also recite "wherein each of said notched prisms has an apex angle and the apex angles of each of said notched prisms disposed on one side of said flat portion are different than the apex angles of the other notched prisms on the one side of said flat portion". This feature is also not shown in Tanaka et al.

Independent claim 25 has also been amended to recite "a height of said plurality of notched prisms decreases as the distance from said central notched prism increases". This feature is also not shown in Tanaka et al.

Independent claim 29 has also been amended to recite "a height of said plurality of notched prisms decreases as the distance from said flat portion increases". This feature is also not shown in Tanaka et al.

For these reasons, it is believed that Tanaka et al. do not teach or suggest the claimed features of the present invention.

Claims 4-6, 36 and 37 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over Tanaka et al. as applied to claim 1 or 33 as applicable above, and further in view of Ebara et al. (JP 2001-118416). Claims 7-9 and 10 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over Tanaka et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Busch et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,477,239). Claims 16-20 and 39-42 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over Tanaka et al. in view of Busch et al.

By this amendment, claims 4-10, 16-20, 36-37 and 39-42 have been cancelled. Therefore, these rejections are now moot and should be withdrawn.

In view of foregoing claim amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance and an action to this effect is respectfully requested.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding the amendments or these remarks, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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